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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS PREVENTIVE DEPLOYMENT FORCE PURSUANT TO SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1058 (1996)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1058 (1996) of 30 May 1996. By that resolution the Security Council decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) for a period terminating on 30 November 1996. The Security Council also requested the Secretary-General to keep it regularly informed of any developments on the ground and other circumstances affecting the mandate of UNPREDEP. It further requested the Secretary-General to review the composition, strength and mandate of UNPREDEP and report to the Council by 30 September 1996 for its consideration. A preliminary review was contained in my report to the Council of 30 September (S/1996/819), in paragraph 16 of which I stated that I would present to the Council my recommendations regarding the future of UNPREDEP prior to the end of its current mandate.

II. COMPOSITION, STRENGTH AND MANDATE OF UNPREDEP

2. Since my last report to the Council, the composition, strength and mandate of UNPREDEP have remained unchanged. Its military component consists of two mechanized infantry battalions: a Nordic composite battalion and a United States Army task force, each with a strength of 500 personnel. These battalions are supported by a 50-person heavy engineering platoon from Indonesia. The total authorized military strength is 1,050 troops and 35 military observers. The number of civilian police monitors is 26, and the authorized strength of the civilian component is 168. International civilian and military personnel are drawn from 50 countries. The mission is headed by my Special Representative, Mr. Henryk Sokalski of Poland. The military component of the mission is headed by the Force Commander, Brigadier-General Bo Wranker of Sweden.

3. The current mandate of UNPREDEP derives from various decisions of the Security Council (see S/1996/819, para. 7). Following President Gligorov's request on 11 November 1992 for the deployment of United Nations observers in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to avert the possible impact there of

the conflict elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia, the Security Council authorized the establishment of a presence of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in that country (resolution 795 (1992) of 11 December 1992). The mandate of UNPROFOR (subsequently renamed UNPREDEP by the Council in resolution 983 (1995) of 31 March 1995) in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was of a preventive nature, aimed at enabling the country to successfully weather a potentially turbulent and hazardous period.

4. The role of UNPROFOR, under Security Council resolution 795 (1992), was to establish a small monitoring presence on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's borders with Albania and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, with a view to monitoring and reporting any developments in the border areas which could undermine confidence and stability in the country or threaten its territory. It was envisaged that such a United Nations presence would also deter threats from any source and help prevent clashes which otherwise might occur between external elements and the country's forces. A small United Nations civilian police detachment was also authorized to monitor the local border police. The rationale for the latter deployment was to calm tensions arising from illegal attempts to cross the border.

5. The initial military component of UNPREDEP comprised a battalion of up to 700 all ranks and 35 military observers. By resolution 842 (1993) of 18 June 1993, the Security Council welcomed the offer by a Member State to reinforce the UNPROFOR presence in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia by 300 troops. Subsequently, in its resolution 1046 (1996) of 13 February 1996, the Council authorized an increase in the strength of UNPREDEP by 50 military personnel, in order to provide for a continued engineering capability in support of its operations. At that time, UNPREDEP also became independent of other peacekeeping operations.

6. In my report to the Security Council of 16 March 1994 (S/1994/300), I pointed out that the UNPROFOR presence in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia appeared to have contributed to stability and had raised the political price of any external aggression against its territorial integrity. However, it was the view of the Force that the more likely sources of violence and instability were internal and thus beyond its mandate (S/1994/300, para. 42). Although I had reported that UNPROFOR was ready to lend its good offices in appropriate circumstances, it had no mandate to intervene in the event that internal instability resulted in some form of civil conflict (ibid., para. 37).

7. By its resolution 908 (1994) of 31 March 1994, the Security Council encouraged the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Former Yugoslavia, in cooperation with the authorities of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, to use his good offices, as appropriate, to contribute to the maintenance of peace and stability in that Republic. The civilian component of the mission, acting under the broadened political mandate thus granted to my Special Representative, has assisted in bringing together various segments of the population in an effort to promote mutual understanding between communities, monitor human rights and ease political and inter-ethnic tensions within the country. This form of action has been of special importance in view of the precarious social and economic situation, which has been compounded by the

impact on the country of mandatory sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the unilateral economic blockade from the south.

8. Humanitarian assistance to the local population, especially on the part of the national battalions, has also been an important contribution, examples of which have been cited in my earlier reports. The commitment of the mission's staff, both civilian and military, as well as external donors' trust in their work, have made it possible to initiate small but effective programmes which have complemented UNPREDEP's main mandate of preventive deployment and good offices. These have had important results in building confidence between the people of the host country and the mission. They have also paved the way for any successor arrangements that may be put in place once the preventive deployment operation in the country comes to an end.

III. ACTIVITIES OF OTHER UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATIONS, AGENCIES AND PROGRAMMES

9. Besides the important role being played by UNPREDEP, other United Nations organizations, agencies and programmes are gradually expanding their role and presence in the country, as they carry out their mandated functions. Their focus has been on institutional capacity-building and their activities are complementary to the work of UNPREDEP.

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights/Centre for Human Rights

10. The small and locally staffed Skopje office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which has been active in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia since 1993, maintains close contacts with the Government for purposes of information and advisory services on human rights. It also serves as a focal point on these matters for local human rights non-governmental organizations.

United Nations Children's Fund

11. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) works closely with the Ministry of Health, Education and Physical Culture and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in addressing the needs of children affected by the process of economic transition and the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, and their social and economic ramifications. The Fund's major activities focus on providing and implementing the country's child immunization programme and assisting in the formulation and execution of educational reforms, as well as developing alternatives to institutional care for children. It also offers assistance to the children of Bosnian refugees in the country.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

12. The office of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Skopje is providing two international consultants to the Government to computerize the cargo division in 21 customs export offices of the Customs Administration. The 18-month project is expected to be completed by May 1997. Conceived as an institution-building and training project, it is designed to

facilitate trade, improve customs efficiency and provide accurate import and export statistics.

United Nations Development Programme

13. Resource constraints continue to delay the establishment of a fully fledged office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). However, UNDP has been able to advance its initial technical cooperation programmes. These include assistance to the Academy of Sciences and Arts in the preparation of a national development strategy, as well as support for investment promotion, standardization, metrology and quality control. The Programme is also actively involved, in consultation with UNPREDEP, in the preparation of a set of intersectoral projects in preventive peace-building designed for external funding.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

14. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been active in the repatriation of Bosnian refugees and their participation in the recent elections in their country. Some 897 refugees have already been repatriated and 300 more are awaiting clearance. The repatriation programme, which began last summer, will continue into 1997.

World Health Organization

15. The World Health Organization (WHO) currently maintains a liaison office in Skopje. Progress has been made on the implementation of a two-year cooperative agreement (1996-1997), based on the priority areas of the Euro Health Programme. The new activities to be initiated will concentrate on health policy development, health-care reform, prevention and control of communicable diseases, environmental health and maternal and child care. At the request of the Minister of Health, a WHO expert team has been investigating an outbreak of unidentified symptoms which affected 1,000 school children and resulted in the hospitalization of over 900 of them in the municipality of Tetovo.

World Bank

16. To date, the commitments of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Development Association (IDA) in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia total some US$ 260 million and cover seven major projects. The latest credits include $8 million for a private farmer support project to increase agricultural productivity and income; $12 million for a private sector development project; and $17 million for a health sector transition project. Most recently the World Bank and the Government concluded negotiations on a structural adjustment loan to support trade liberalization and agricultural policy reforms.

International Monetary Fund

17. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has completed two financial arrangements with the Government: a Systemic Transformation Facility arrangement and a standby arrangement, totalling disbursements of $75 million.

The Fund and the Government have concluded negotiations for an Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility agreement which would provide an additional $80 million over a three-year period, at concessional interest rates. The IMF Board's approval of this agreement is expected in January 1997. The Fund has also supported numerous technical assistance programmes, including two long-term projects, one with the Department of Banking Supervision of the National Bank of Macedonia and the other, a modernization project, with the Customs Administration.

IV. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

18. As I have previously reported to the Council, there has been considerable improvement in the relations between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and its neighbours. Nevertheless, there are areas where progress has been slow. After two meetings of the Joint Border Commission, no significant progress has yet been achieved on the question of the demarcation of the border with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Likewise, in the dispute between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, some pending issues are yet to be resolved. Talks in this regard are continuing under the auspices of my Special Envoy, Mr. Cyrus Vance. Beginning on 6 November, the parties met in New York for several days and agreed to meet again at a mutually convenient date in December.

19. Inter-ethnic tensions continue to characterize the domestic political scene. The Government has stated that its policies of affirmative action on minority rights have produced positive results, particularly in the field of minority-language education, including at the university level. The present quota system provides for the university enrolment of students of a given ethnic group in proportion to that group's representation in the country's total population. Information provided by the Government also indicates that there is a steady increase in the number of staff from the various ethnic groups in State institutions.

20. The political parties of the ethnic Albanians, however, do not share the Government's assessment of the situation. Through both political action and street demonstrations, they have demanded that the Government improve the political status of Albanians and officially recognize the "University of Tetovo" within the existing educational system. They have also called for the release of all political prisoners, including the Rector of Tetovo University.

21. In the run-up to the local elections on 17 November, opposition parties expressed concern over a possible discrepancy in the number of eligible voters. Some parties have characterized the preparations and procedures of the electoral process as inadequate. These expressions of concern notwithstanding, an active electoral campaign was conducted by all major political parties, including those that had boycotted the second round of parliamentary elections held two years ago. Ultimately, except for a few incidents, the first round of the elections proceeded generally in an orderly manner.

V. OBSERVATIONS

22. As I had the opportunity to note in my most recent report to the Council (S/1996/819), peace and stability in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are intimately linked to the overall situation in the region. While much progress has been achieved there since the signing of the Dayton Agreement, it is clear that the international community's political and military involvement in the former Yugoslavia will of necessity continue for some time in order to consolidate peace and security. The original purpose of deploying a preventive United Nations mission in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was to prevent conflicts elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia from spilling over or threatening that country. Recent developments in the region, and the enhanced international standing of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, have made such a scenario more remote. Moreover, as noted above, it has become increasingly evident that the primary threat to the country's stability may come from internal political tensions. UNPREDEP has accordingly devoted considerable attention to strengthening dialogue between the political forces and has assisted in monitoring human rights and inter-ethnic relations.

23. As I stated in my report to the Council of 23 May 1996 (S/1996/373), I believe that at this time of financial crisis UNPREDEP, like all peacekeeping operations, must be rigorously evaluated in order to determine if its mandate is still relevant in the present context and, if so, whether it can be implemented with fewer resources. As pointed out in paragraph 43 of that report, the issue at stake is whether the current volume of patrolling and the current number of observation posts are absolutely necessary.

24. In previous reports I had concluded that, in order to implement the current mandate, the optimal strength and configuration of the military component of UNPREDEP was the one currently authorized. Nonetheless, I am conscious that, in this period of relative tranquillity, the Council may judge that economies are necessary. Last September, I submitted an analysis of the consequences of reverting to the original infantry strength of 700 all ranks, plus an engineering platoon of 50 (S/1996/819). I am now in a position to inform the Council that a reconfiguration along these lines would offer savings of some $400,000 per month. It would require, however, that the force shift from an active and comprehensive patrolling capability to a more limited, and at times static, monitoring presence, particularly along the northern border, a number of observation posts being eliminated.

25. I shall continue to review the status of the deployment of the Force and its concept and strength, with a view to submitting further recommendations in the light of developments in the entire region and their impact upon peace and stability in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Meanwhile, it will be recalled that, in a letter addressed to me on 6 August 1996, the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia requested the extension of the UNPREDEP mandate for six months beyond 30 November 1996. I accordingly recommend that the mandate of the Force should be extended for a further six months, to 31 May 1997, with a phased reduction of the military component by 300 all ranks by 1 April 1997. This timing would allow for the reduction in the Force to be fully effected after the severe winter conditions have passed and for the Secretariat to undertake the necessary consultations with troop-

contributing countries. During this mandate period I shall also consult United Nations agencies and other relevant organizations on the modalities for continuing international support to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. On this basis I will submit recommendations to the Council on the type of international presence that would be appropriate with effect from June 1997.

26. I wish to express my gratitude to the troop-contributing countries for their contribution to the success of UNPREDEP. I also pay tribute to my Special Representative, Mr. Henryk Sokalski, and the Force Commander, Brigadier-General Bo Wranker, as well as to the dedicated civilian and military personnel of UNPREDEP who have served the mission with distinction since its inception.